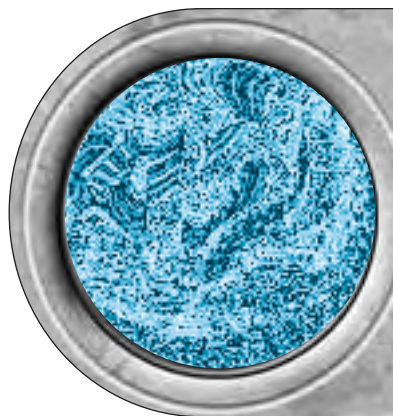




LIVING IN THE HERE AND NOW: SOLID GROUND

Second Opinions

March 19, 2011

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 7:13, 14 (CEV) • “Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it.”

Psalms 19:7-9 (NIV) • “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous.”

Psalms 119:4, 5 (NIV) • “You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!”

(See additional passages in student material.)

Additional resource: a helpful article, “Biblical Hospitality: Inviting Everyone to the Table,” was published in the November/December 2003 *Youthworker* magazine. Articles are archived at www.youthspecialties.com/articles/Youthworker. Click on “Index of *Youthworker* articles.”

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “SOLID GROUND”

“Postmodernism” probably isn’t a word that comes up in the everyday vocabulary of your early teens, yet they’re the first generation to be wholly the products of a postmodern world. Among other things, this means that concepts of absolute right and wrong that earlier generations would have taken for granted no longer mean much in this culture. Behavior may not be seen as “wrong” but as “right for me,” or “right in this situation.” In a world comprised of a mosaic of different cultural and religious beliefs, values, and expectations, it may be hard for teens to find solid ground. Where do young people of this generation place the ultimate value? On success? entertainment? personal satisfaction? Christian teens need to learn to cope realistically with the world they live in—a world in which others will not automatically agree with their Christian values and standards—while planting their own feet firmly on the Word of God as their source of truth and guidance.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “SOLID GROUND”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Recognize that they live in a world that recognizes few, if any “absolutes.”
2. Distinguish between the concepts of “absolute truth” and “relative truth.”
3. Choose the Bible as the basis for absolute truth in their own lives.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) maze handouts (p. 132), pencils; (Activity B) flour, water, salt, food coloring, bowl, mixing spoon.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons, paper, pens or pencils.

Applying • Paper, pens or pencils.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Ask them which verse they chose to learn from Wednesday's portion of their lesson. Give them opportunity to say their verses from memory.
2. Give the students opportunity to "quote" themselves, using what they wrote in the Monday portion of their lesson. Be sure to debrief them about any quotations that might not reflect the Christian life accurately. However, quotations of this nature do not occur in every lesson.
3. Review responses that they and others made to the scenario that was posed on Sunday. Discuss the variety of responses, ending with thoughts from last week's What's to Be Said About . . . in the teacher lesson.

If you have a very large group, have adults available to process this section with smaller groups of students.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for *Adventist Mission for Youth and Adult* at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word. At some point you should distribute or call their attention to their student lesson for this week.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Give students a copy of the maze handout on page 132.

Get set • Say: Take your pencil and do the two maze puzzles on your handout. When you've finished, compare your mazes with what the person next to you did.

Go • Let students complete the mazes, then compare. **Ask:** How is the first maze different from the second maze? (The first has only one correct path, but with the second you could follow more than one path and still get to the finish.) **Compare examples of people who used different paths to complete the second maze.** **Ask:** Are all the answers to number two equally "right" as long as they end up at the finish?

Debriefing • Ask: Which of these mazes is more like our lives? (Each of the mazes is more like certain aspects of our lives than the other is.) **Are there many right paths we can take to reach our goal, or just one?** (It depends on the goal.) **What if the goal is eternal life and heaven?** (There's only one right path.) **What situations have you been in in which there is only "one right way" to do things? What situations have you been in in which there was more than one way to achieve the goal?**

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Provide the following ingredients

and a bowl and spoon for mixing: 1 cup flour, ½ cup salt, ½ cup very warm water, few drops food coloring.

Get set • Instruct students to mix flour and salt, then add in water and food coloring and knead for five minutes. The result should be play clay.

Go • Have all students work together with a small group (five people or less). After making the play clay, have them try a second batch (perhaps with a different color food coloring) and suggest they vary the amount of salt or water. See how the finished product varies. If your group is larger, divide into groups of two or three and give each small group the ingredients for play clay. Suggest to a couple groups that instead of following the recipe they might want to vary the amounts (or try cold water instead of warm) and see what happens. Compare results.

Debriefing • Ask: Did following the recipe give you the end produce you expected? What happened if you tried to vary it? How much do you think you could mess around with this recipe and still get play clay? How is life like a recipe? (God provides instructions in His Word; we follow them in order to live a successful life.) How much can we “mess around” with the recipe for our lives and still get a good result? Is there only “one right way” to do it, or are there many ways to achieve a good result? (Point out that this is about the truths laid out in the Bible, not necessarily about their choices of career, or life mate, although God will give guidance in those areas too.)

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Jessica believes that there’s one right way to live, and that’s what the Bible teaches. Her friend Andrew says, “Just because your Bible says it’s wrong, doesn’t mean it’s wrong. If what I’m doing doesn’t hurt anybody, then it’s right for me.” Jessica and Andrew believe in a lot of the same things. They both work hard in school and get good grades. They both volunteer after

school because they like to help others. But Jessica thinks it’s wrong to drink, do drugs, or have sex before marriage. Andrew says, “Those things are only wrong if somebody gets hurt.” Jessica believes it’s important to go to church on the Sabbath day and to pray. Andrew says, “If those things make you feel good, that’s terrific. I don’t need them. Whenever I am listening to music or relaxing in nature, it makes me feel in touch with my spiritual side.”

Debriefing • Ask: Who’s right? If you were Jessica, how would you respond to Andrew? Do your friends believe the Bible shows us the only right way to live, or do they think each person can decide for themselves what’s right? How do you decide what’s right?

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Have students make a chart with two columns (a small group can do this together on a flipchart or poster board; in a larger class have students work in pairs with a piece of paper for each pair). One column should be headed: “Truth Never Changes,” the other: “Different Truths for Different People.” **Say:** We hear a lot about “truth,” but we also hear different voices telling us what is true. Most Christians believe that in God’s Word, the Bible, God revealed a truth for all time that never changes. But many people today teach that “truth” can be different things to different people, in different situations. Distribute or refer to the students lesson and look at the quotes in Monday’s section of the lesson. Decide which of the two columns each statement belongs in. Does the speaker support the idea that the truth of God’s Word never changes, or do they suggest that truth is something each person decides for themselves? Discuss the quotes with the students as they write them in the two columns. Then, look at the Bible texts from

Wednesday's portion of the lesson. What do they say about how to find truth? Have students write them in the appropriate column. Finally, ask students to brainstorm about the messages they get from other people, books, TV shows, movies, about where to find truth. Have them write in each column other "voices" in their world that support each of these views.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's portion of the lesson.

Ask: Do you think this parable makes sense? Is God's solution to sin really like the antidote to a deadly snakebite? Why or why not? Have you ever heard anyone say that Christians are narrow-minded because they believe there's only "one right way"? What do you think about that? Do you believe the Bible is our only right guide to how to live, or should we look to ourselves to know what's right and wrong?

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

You're writing a very important test in a class that you're not doing well in. If you flunk this test, you might fail. You're finding the test difficult, but you can easily see your studious friend's answers, and the teacher's not looking.

Ask: How do you decide whether or not to cheat? Is anyone getting hurt if you cheat? Is it up to you to decide for yourself what's right or wrong in this situation, or do you need to look at what God's Word says? Are there any biblical principles that can guide you in facing this situation?

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Give each student a piece of paper and ask them to make three columns. Head them: GOD'S STANDARDS, THE WORLD'S STANDARDS, MY STANDARDS. On the left hand side of the page, they are to list issues that they have to make moral decisions about, such as drugs, premarital sex, honesty, dating, entertainment, etc. Encourage them to choose topics that are relevant to their lives. Then, for each of the topics they have listed, have them fill out the three columns: what are God's standards on this issue (have them find a Bible verse to back this up), what are the world's standards (as evidenced by friends, media, etc), and what are their own standards?

Debriefing • Say: Compare what you have in each of the three columns for each one of your moral decisions. Are your standards more like those of the world, or are they closer to God's standards? What are you basing your moral decisions on?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How do you respond to the statement, "It's not wrong as long as nobody gets hurt?"
2. What's your standard for deciding what's right and what's wrong?
3. Do you agree with people who say that the world today is getting more immoral and farther from God? If so, what's your evidence? If not, give reasons why you believe this.
4. What do most of your friends believe about the Bible? Do they think it can give guidance for their daily lives?
5. What would you tell someone who says, "I look inside myself to find out if something's wrong or right. I can feel inside me if something's wrong, so I don't need the Bible or the church"?
6. Does the Bible still apply to our lives today? How can it, when it was written in a totally different culture thousands of years ago?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

We don't live in a world of easy black-and-white decisions. There seem to be a lot of shades of gray to choose from. Sometimes it's easy for us to conform to the world's standard and base our decisions on what feels right at

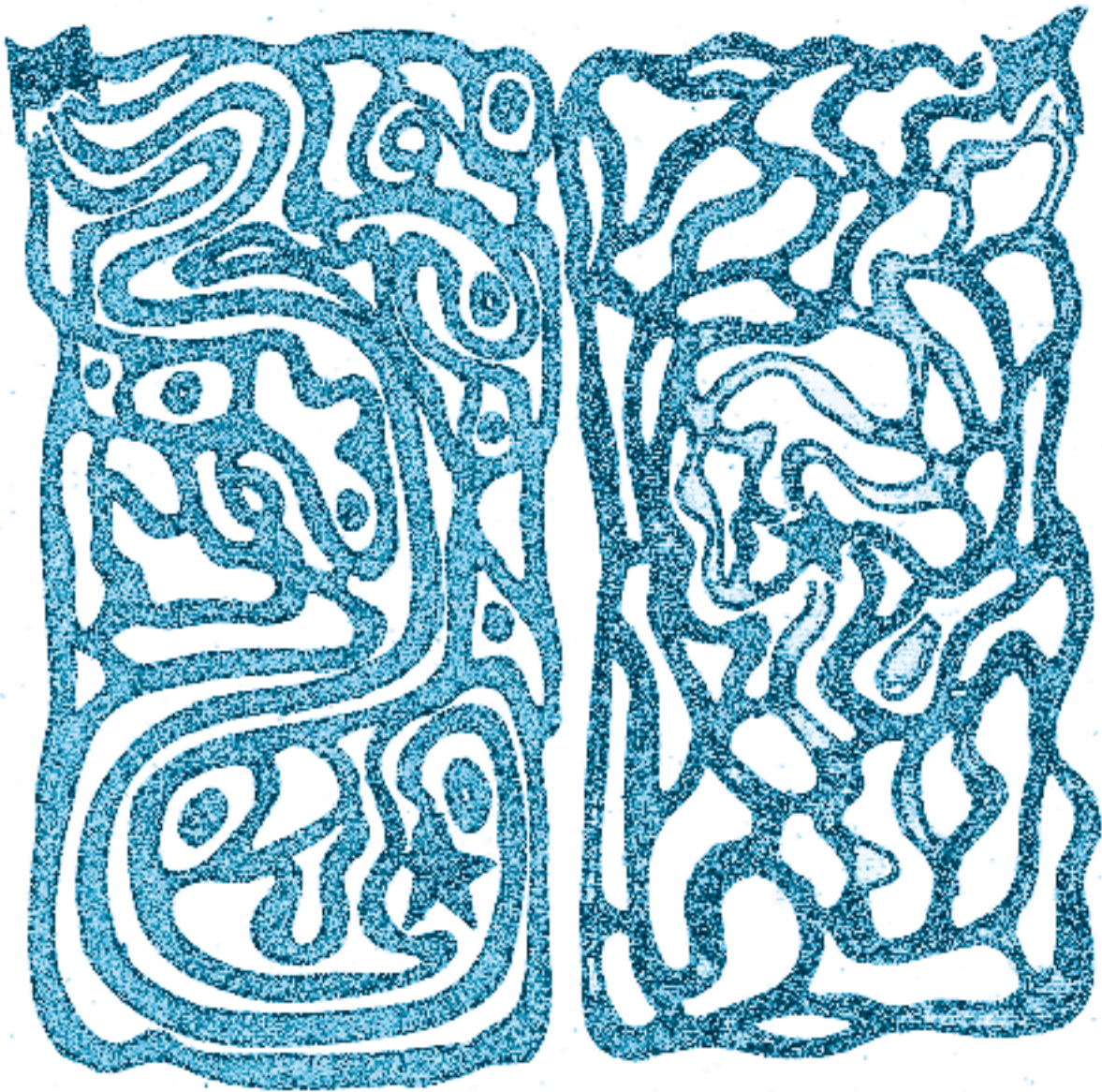
the moment or what gives us the greatest personal satisfaction. But God's Word holds us to a higher, eternal standard. It's the solid ground under our feet when all the world has to offer is shifting sand. We need to be honest about the kind of world we live in and accept that people have a lot of different views and ideas. But while we can listen tolerantly to all these different viewpoints, we need to be sure about what our own beliefs are and what they are based on. God's Word is always the surest foundation!

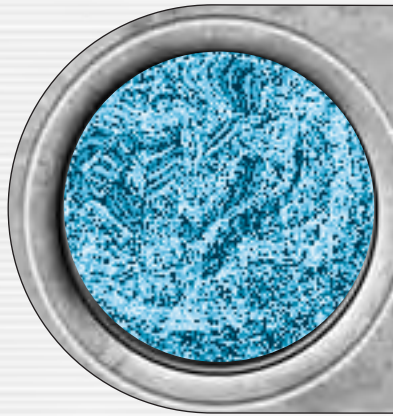
FOR LESSON 12:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE BEGINNING ACTIVITY A.

Life's A Maze

DIRECTIONS: Find your way from the outside to the center of each of the mazes marking your path with your pencil.





STUDENT LESSON

LIVING IN THE HERE AND NOW: SOLID GROUND

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>>KEY TEXT: Choose one of the texts from Wednesday's portion of the lesson. Write it here and memorize it this week.



SECOND OPINIONS

(What connection do you think the following illustration has with the Bible texts on the other page?)

While traveling around the world, John and his wife Anne were camping in a country far from home when John was bitten by a snake. Not knowing what kind of snake it was or what the bite's effects might be, John and Anne jumped into their jeep and headed for the nearest town, where a doctor examined John's red, swollen, angry-looking snakebite wound.

"You were bitten by the most dangerous snake in this part of the country," the doctor said, "and the bite is fatal. Without treatment, you have less than an hour to live."

"Is there any treatment?" Anne asked, frantic to save her husband's life.

"Yes, you're very fortunate that I have a small amount of the antidote here in my clinic," the doctor said, filling the syringe.

"Wait a second," John said. "You're saying this antidote of yours is the only cure for the snakebite venom?"

"The only known cure, sir," the doctor said.

"Hurry up and give him the needle!" Anne insisted.

"No, I want to think about this," John said. "I think it's pretty narrow-minded of you to insist this is the only treatment available. What if I want to try something different? I don't like needles. I like herbal remedies. Maybe there's an herb I can take? Or, I'd like to try doing some exercises to see if those would make it better."

"We must hurry, sir," the doctor said. "Already the poison is spreading through your bloodstream. I repeat, this antidote is the only cure."

"John, just let him give you the needle," Anne begged.

"I'm really not sure about this," John said. "There's always more than one way to approach a situation. I think we need to explore other options rather than just taking his word for it that there's only one cure."

In real life, this situation would be unthinkable. In a life-or-death situation, most people would accept the doctor's word that there's only one available treatment. But many people reject the message that there's only one way to eternal salvation—through Jesus—and only one guide to living life—the Bible. How is God's truth like the snakebite antidote? How is it different? Is a person who rejects God's "treatment" behaving as foolishly as John did in this story?



Sunday

HERE'S WHAT I THINK

Your friend Tiffany is one of the nicest people you know. She's always cheerful and pleasant, she's kind to everyone, she likes to get involved in activities that will make the world a better place, like raising money for the homeless or starting a recycling program. You ask if she'd like to come to church with you, but she says, "I believe Jesus was a good man, but I don't think He was God. I think God is in all of us; God is whatever you want Him to be. And I don't think I'm a sinner, so why do I need to be saved?"

Does Tiffany need Jesus? How do you respond to her beliefs? Is there a way to share your beliefs that would be meaningful to her?

Log on to www.guidemagazine.org/rtf to post your responses. Be up-front and honest. Say what you think.



Monday

WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO SAY?

Different people, different opinions. Some of the quotations below represent the views of true kingdom citizens; others may not. Can you tell the difference? How do these statements compare with what God is saying in His Word? After reviewing the texts in the God Says . . . portion of the lesson, write a statement that captures your belief. Be prepared to quote yourself at Sabbath School.

>> "Truth hurts—not the searching after; the running from!"—*John Eyberg.*

>> "Seven out of ten teens say there is no absolute moral truth, and eight out of ten claim that all truth is relative to the individual and his/her circumstances."—*George Barna, current U.S. researcher on social trends.*

>> "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."—*Jesus (John 14:6, NIV).*

>> "We observe the ultimate right and responsibility of each individual to hold him or herself as the ultimate authority in all matters."—*from the Web site of a Satanist "church."*

>> "In this Word [the Bible], God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history."—*28 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.*

>> "Beware of reasoning about God's Word—obey it."—*Oswald Chambers, 20th-century British clergyman and writer.*

>> "If it feels right then just do it / Momma says the opposite I go through with it / So what you gonna do? / Daddy don't approve of you / If it feels right then just do it, do it."—*From the song "If It Feels Right," performed by American pop singer Aimee Allen.*

Write your own quotation.
WHAT I SAY IS . . .



Tuesday

SO WHAT?

When your grandparents were teens, most people around them probably believed that the Bible set the standard for what was right and wrong, even if they didn't follow it themselves! We live in a different world. More and more people today believe the truth is something that comes from inside you. People question the authority of the Bible and of God, and look to other sources or to themselves for truth. A lot of the old standards of right and wrong don't seem to apply anymore. How do you make decisions about what's right and wrong when it seems there are more choices than ever before?

Though we need to respect others who make different choices, as Christian young peo-

ple we still need to stand firm on the Bible as our authority. It doesn't change. Basing your beliefs and your actions on God's Word will give you solid ground to stand on in a world where everything seems to be changing so fast, it's almost impossible to keep up with it.



Wednesday
GOD SAYS . . .

>> Matthew 7:13, 14 (CEV)

"Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it."

>> Proverbs 3:5, 6 (Message)

"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track."

>> Psalm 119:9, 10 (Message)

"How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading the map of your Word. I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted."

>> Titus 1:15 (NIV)

"To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted."

>> 1 Timothy 4:3 (Message)

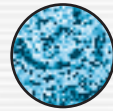
"These liars have lied so well and for so long that they've lost their capacity for truth."

>> 2 Timothy 4:3 (CEV)

"The time is coming when people won't listen to good teaching. Instead, they will look for teachers who will please them by telling them only what they are itching to hear."

>> 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (CEV)

"You can be certain that in the last days there will be some very hard times. People will love only themselves and money. They will be proud, stuck-up, rude, and disobedient to their parents. They will also be ungrateful, godless, heartless, and hateful. Their words will be cruel, and they will have no self-control or pity. These people will hate everything that is good. They will be sneaky, reckless, and puffed up with pride. Instead of loving God, they will love pleasure. Even though they will make a show of being religious, their religion won't be real. Don't have anything to do with such people."



Thursday
**WHAT DOES THIS
HAVE TO DO WITH ME?**

You face choices every day. Whom do you trust to give you guidance with those choices? Your inner "gut feeling"? Your friends? The media—TV, movies, music? Your parents? Your church?

While all those factors will influence you, it's important to have one authority that backs up all the others, one that doesn't change with the latest trends. You'll hear many people today saying that there's no such thing as "absolute truth." What's right for me may not be right for you. While this can certainly be true in matters of personal taste (the green striped biking shorts may be OK for you, but not for me!), in matters of faith and morality you need a solid foundation. That can only be found in God's Word, the Bible.

What about friends who don't believe in the Bible as God's Word? Is it "true for you, but not true for them"? No, the Bible is for everyone. But that doesn't mean we shove it down the throats of those who don't believe. We live in a world today that offers more diversity in terms of people's beliefs and cultures than ever before. In a world like this, we need to respect others and remember that they have the same right to their beliefs as we do to ours—while at the same time keeping our feet firmly planted on what we do believe.



Friday

HOW DOES IT WORK?

In the center circle write a few words or draw a picture to represent a question or problem in your life right now. Then, in the smaller circles, draw stick figures to illustrate parents, friends, teachers, etc. Next to each picture, write briefly what you think that person would say about your question or problem.

In the top circle write what God's Word has to say about your question or problem (you may need to look up some Bible verses). Draw a line from that circle to the "problem" circle, then compare what's written there to what you think others would have to say. Are the voices of important people in your life giving you the same advice God's Word gives you, or are they leading you in different directions?

